



COMMUNICATING *Together*

A Quarterly Magazine Published by Blissymbolics
Communication Institute Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Vol. 1 No. 4

Fall 1983



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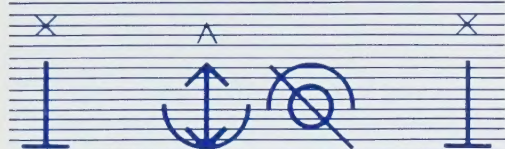


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Communicating Together is published quarterly as a means of sharing the experiences, systems and techniques of non-speaking people with their families, communities and the professionals who work with them. Special attention is given to the non-reader's augmentative communication system and the role of Blissymbolics.

The Blissymbolics Communication Institute was established in 1975 to facilitate the use of Blissymbolics as a communication system for non-speaking persons around the world.

BCI Affiliates and Information Centres are situated in —

Canada: Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec

United States: Alabama, Florida, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota

Other than North America: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, India, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Venezuela, West Germany, Zimbabwe

Through BCI and its Affiliates, over 8,000 instructors have been trained worldwide.

Blissymbolics is a system providing comprehensive communication for the non-speaking non-reading person. It can be used with a variety of picture systems and technologies, and with traditional orthography — offering a basic structure for the non-reader's augmentative communication system.

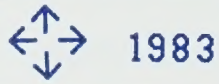
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Outreach 1983



1983

by Emily McQueen

This past summer BCI was fortunate to receive funding from the federal government through its Summer Canada Program for student employment. This enabled BCI to hire four university students to undertake a community awareness program. Emily McQueen, with whom the following interview was conducted, was the project manager. She has completed her undergraduate degree in psychology, and is about to begin further studies in education. She was joined in the project by Allyson Harrison and Denise Day, also new graduates in psychology, and Gary Beelik, a Special Arts student at the Ontario College of Art. Emily speaks here about the many varied and innovative ways these young people found to inform the community generally about nonspeaking people and specifically about Blissymbolics.

As project manager for the Blissymbolics Communication Institute Summer Student Program, I was about to embark on a summer job filled with "bliss" and excitement. I arrived at BCI a week ahead of the other three students to uncover the summer that lay ahead. Finding out what the summer project was all about was one thing, but putting such a fascinating pursuit into action was the ultimate challenge.

The task was twofold. First of all, it was our mandate to help the community become more aware and accepting of nonspeaking people, which was accomplished through introducing Blissymbolics to the community. Second, as project manager I was to ensure that the three other students I worked with had a valuable learning experience. To accomplish this was quite a large order but it also promised to be an exciting opportunity.

June 8, 1983, was the first step in getting to know some nonspeaking people. We had all worked with special needs kids before, but never with nonspeaking ones, so there was a lot to learn. This initial period

taught us a lot. For example, it was easy to say, "Because people are nonspeaking doesn't mean they are nonfeeling or nonthinking," but we quickly learned it was much more difficult to refrain from "yes/no" questions and from a patronizing approach. We also had to learn to be attentive and to use our eyes as well as our ears, in order to understand what was intended. We had to work hard not to speak for the nonspeaking people we met, and not to place them in a passive role.

We learned also that this is true with much of our communication generally; that we so often talk *at* each other rather than *with* each other. It becomes so obvious that this is true when you are with a nonspeaking person and you're babbling away telling them what they're thinking. It slaps you in the face, really. I had to ask myself, "Is this what I do with everyone?" For myself, personally, that was one of the most important things I learned, and it has made me so much more sensitive to all kinds of communication.

Even though I felt sometimes that it was beyond me, it was really exciting that first week. The challenge was set; our goals lay ahead; we would try to leave behind us the important message that nonspeaking people are making and can continue to make a rich contribution to our world, but it's up to us to meet them halfway.

We tried to schedule our whole summer right at the beginning. We decided that the ideal situation was first, to orient ourselves and learn as much as we could; then put together our presentation so that we felt confident about it; and finally try to prepare the community for us. Our target groups were professionals, special education people and others who would be working with nonspeaking people, and children in day camps and summer schools, because we felt they would be most accepting of what we were doing. Beyond that, we grouped everyone else under "general public."

For the first month of the project we were housed with the very busy Augmentative Communication Service of OCCC. It was really great for us because we were right in the middle of everything, and we learned an awful lot. We helped out as much as we could, and also sat in on sessions with some clients.

When we finally started going out into the community, I know the thing that started going through my head was, here I am representing nonspeaking people and I'm still scrambling to understand these things myself. I really had to struggle with my own feelings and my own hangups about it. It was very good for me, because it made me think and work at sorting out things I hadn't had to think about before.

Day Camps were Great

The day camps were a lot of fun, and the kids were enthusiastic and receptive. All together we visited 12 day camps and recreation centres and spoke to a total of 600 children. We always started a session with questions like, "Do you know anyone who doesn't speak?" or "How do you think a person who can't speak might talk without speaking?" and went on from there. And often, there would be one child in the crowd that either had a family member or someone they knew who couldn't speak.

The general program for children included a board presentation using a three-foot square felt board with foot-high colored felt Blissymbols. We also had a lot of handouts, like mimeographed Blissymbol boards the children could keep, a crossword puzzle using symbols and a really successful Blissymbol Bingo game that Allyson made up. These were standard for all our presentations with children. We showed slides, as well, and we had one Blissymbol scavenger hunt. We also allowed a lot of time for questions, not only at the end, but throughout the presentations.

The children ranged in age from

about 6 to 14, so there was usually a very wide age spread. Sessions were usually an hour, sometimes more. We worked with different sized groups. The smaller they were, basically, the more successful they were, because in smaller groups the kids were a little more open about talking, and we could keep their attention longer.

At one day camp we thought there would be 50 kids in the group, and when we arrived, there were 120 children. It was quite a surprise, and a bit overwhelming at first, though it turned out to be pretty interesting. In fact, that group sent us feedback forms afterward that said, "I think there were too many children for the two ladies to handle." But the amazing thing was that when we distributed the symbol boards, the terrific noise level created by all those kids fell to an almost complete hush. The kids were completely fascinated.

We spoke openly to the children about cerebral palsy, and about kids that are nonspeaking and are handicapped, using very large pictures of nonspeaking kids. We also discussed brain damage, though we simplified it a lot, because it seems that when young children hear "brain damage," they think immediately that it means retarded. Even really young kids seemed to think that way.

Kids are so easy to work with, because when they think something, they say it, and then you can work from there.

The Professionals

We also approached universities and colleges — York University, the University of Toronto and Seneca College — and spoke to 120 students in special education and speech and language classes. The sessions with the special education people were extremely successful. We were encouraged about our presentation and format because they were so overwhelmingly excited about what we were talking about. At the beginning of one presentation we showed *Now I Can Speak*, and that film stimulated so much discussion that in many ways the presentation took care of itself.

At my first session with a group of



Allyson plays Blissymbol Bingo with campers.

special education students I felt a little strange, because I thought they must know more than I did. But again they were receptive and encouraging and it was really very rewarding to talk to them.

After that first session it was easier to talk to the others. In fact, that class was one of those times when I felt we really had done something. One of the students spoke of a family that had been told their 11-year-old child was too retarded to ever communicate. She had never had a communication assessment. Well, I was able to help point that family in the right direction. When those things happened, I had a strong sense of personal reward for the work we were doing. I could see that because I had been there, one family had been helped.

The General Public

Our real problem was how to reach the general public. It wasn't easy. So many people are nervous, frightened or simply unaware of nonspeaking people.

We decided to contact people in places such as public libraries, service clubs and resource centres. Some of them, including Northern District Library, Sunnylea Kiwanis, Seneca Village, The Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Gerrard Resource Centre, Metro Home Care and Deer Park Library were receptive to us, and we were able to give information sessions (mostly on a one-to-one basis).

We also tried displays at shopping malls. What we did was set up tables for one or two days, with board displays that would catch the eye and a few open books that children could leaf through as they passed by. We also had some general information hand outs, and some copies of *Communicating Together*. We all did shifts throughout the summer, manning the displays and answering questions.

The public streaming through those malls didn't show a great deal of interest, really, though a lot of people did look at our display, and

some asked what we were doing. We tried not to be too aggressive, because we didn't want to lose them, but if there was any interest we would talk to them. It was better, we felt, to send someone away with just a few words and some general information than to drive them away by coming on too strong.

But I shouldn't be too pessimistic about it, because we actually did reach some parents of nonspeaking children who knew nothing about Blissymbolics or any other system. Two were parents and one was an uncle who was directly involved with children who could benefit from the facilities at OCCC. It was wonderful to be able to reach those few people. In fact, I do feel that if that had been all that had happened all summer, the program would have been worthwhile.

A File for Libraries

Our final project was to compile and distribute a vertical file of general information. Denise and Allyson delivered the files personally to about 42 Metro libraries and resource centres, including CNIB, the Rumbal Centre for the Deaf and the Metro Toronto Community Information Centre. We also gave everyone a copy of Gary's 18" x 24" "Communicate Together" poster. BCI now has an accurate record of the locations of each vertical file, and can direct inquiries to those locations.

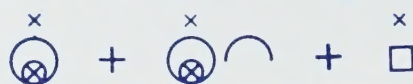
Room to Grow

Over the summer all of us learned to feel confident about what we were doing. We took it seriously, and treated it as something very important. When you have a small team and there's a lot to be done, you've got to do it and I think maybe that helped each of us bring out our strengths.

We feel we have laid the groundwork, but we've really only scratched the surface. There's still a great deal to be done.□

Judging from the many letters and comments we've received from people our "team" visited this summer, there's no question that a decided impact was made—Ed.

Machines, Computers and Things



Crystal Bay School Builds a Communication System

The following articles describe the touch sensitive keyboard project at Crystal Bay School in Nepean, Ontario. The first, written by Jane Cale of the Carleton Board of Education, follows the development of the project, and lists the various interest groups involved. The second, by Les Zielinski of the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario (APEO), Ottawa Chapter, outlines the maintenance procedures now in place for the school's new Blissapple system.

Wanted: A Way to Communicate

Over the past two years, Crystal Bay School has been involved in a special project to help mentally handicapped, non-vocal, school-aged children to communicate. Crystal Bay School has a population of 82 students ranging in age from 5 to 21, 28 of them involved in total communication programs (speech, manual sign language, Blissymbols, traditional orthography, gesture, facial expression and body posture). Significant developments in the field of Augmentative Communication had provided our non-vocal students with the means to communicate. However, written records or hard copy were not available to those who lacked "pen and paper" skills, leaving these students dependent on others for visual display of their messages.

We soon had our solution. In the fall of 1981, representatives from the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario, Ottawa Chapter, contacted the school in search of a project for the International Year of Disabled Persons. Soon after, with funding from APEO, we were outlining our initial specifications for an assistive communication device:

- Access to 150-200 Blissymbols
- Direct selection as a means of indicating
- Single key representation
- Durability and reliability
- Visual feedback capability
- Correctability
- Facility for printed copy

The first phase of the project for APEO involved locating a terminal. They initially considered the Blissymbol Terminal designed by the National Research Council, Ottawa, and developed and built by Norpak Ltd. of Toronto. However, the results of a formal field study on the prototype terminal indicated that our specifications could not be met. As a result, APEO decided to use the Apple microcomputer (Apple II or Apple II Plus) with 48K memory, one disk drive and the Blissapple software program.

The Blissapple software program developed by G. Vanderheiden and D. Kelso of the Trace Center (University of Wisconsin, Madison) allows a user, through an appropriate interface with the computer, to communicate independently in Blissymbols, as well as to have his/her message displayed on a monitor screen, printed on a printer or spoken by way of a voice synthesizer (the symbols accessed by specifying each symbol's vocabulary code number). However, our mentally handicapped non-vocal students were unable to access the Blissapple through the number coding system. Therefore, the second phase of the project consisted of locating a touch sensitive keyboard.

The commercially available keyboard, RCA VP 601, was chosen over a custom keyboard due to

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Willowdale, Ontario.**

availability, reliability and cost. This special keyboard requires a connector cable and AIO Interface board/card that connects the RCA keyboard to the computer. (These accessories are standard, off-the-shelf commercial products.) This special interface still allows for access to the Apple keyboard. The ability to automatically switch back and forth between the keyboard and other input modes is useful for a teacher to demonstrate something, e.g., make a change in the vocabulary or allow the user to carry on a conversation with someone else using the keyboard.

With the co-operation of the Trace Center, the National Research Council, the Augmentative Communication Service, Toronto, the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario (Ottawa Chapter), CHIPS Computer Club of Bell Northern Research and the staff of the school, we now have the Blissapple software program operating with a standard Apple II Plus, one disk drive, two black and white monitors, an internal keyboard (direct encoding) and an external commercial touch sensitive keyboard (direct selection).

Brief trial runs with a limited supply of clear plastic self-sticking Blissymbol stamps have proven the feasibility of this material and further supplies are being organized through various graphic departments within the Carleton Board of Education. Serious trial runs await the availability of proper labelling material for the touch sensitive spaces on the keyboard.

Future requirements also include:

- An expanded version of the touch sensitive keyboard to allow for maximum access to our users who have 150 to 200 symbol vocabularies (The present keyboard allows for 52 symbols; a duplicate of this board, to be in-house in the Fall of '83, will provide 104 potential symbols.)
- A user determined vocabulary (The present labelling system does not allow for easy shift of labels; a standard vocabulary must be used. Vocabulary overlays for each user are required so that the custom user vocabulary feature of the Blissapple software program can be utilized.)

* * * *

Maintenance of the Blissapple System

Maintenance of a computer system in a school environment is an important and evolving task. However, maintenance of special facilities such as the Blissapple in a special school like Crystal Bay requires even greater attention to the maintenance problem. In this case, it has been possible to put together a system in which maintenance problems potentially are limited to replacement of standard sub-assemblies, such as a keyboard or AIO card, etc. Because commercially available components are used, the Carleton School Board Equipment Maintenance Department can be called upon for assistance on an "as required" basis. Also, because the equipment was purchased through the Board's purchasing department, normal commercial agreements are assured.

Effectively, a viable follow-up system now exists. However, the staff of the school has had to learn not only the operation of the Blissapple system, but also has had to become competent in the diagnosis of problems as they arise.

Everything is being handled very well at Crystal Bay School. Copies of the programs are being duplicated on extra discs and special spare components are being ordered to provide quick response time in case of potential equipment breakdown. In this way, confidence in the equipment, supported by good maintenance practices, may further enhance future use of the Blissapple system in a structured program at the school. □

New Distributor in Australia and New Zealand

BCI is pleased to announce that all its publications and teaching materials are now available in Australia and New Zealand from:

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Sharing Ideas With Nora

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'Sharing Ideas with Nora' is a forum for sharing information concerning all aspects of Augmentative Communication. Nora Rothschild, consultant with the Augmentative Communication Service of the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre, heads up this regular column focusing on readers' questions, answers, problems and experiences.

Dear Readers,

Please share ... your ideas, problems, frustrations, experiences, thoughts and dreams.

I know that a lot of you, as users of augmentative communication systems and as friends, relatives and professionals, have experienced many frustrations as well as breakthroughs. Although problems are difficult to live with, and even more difficult to share with others, it is very possible that other readers have had similar experiences and perhaps have been lucky enough to find full or partial solutions.

Communicating Together is a publication read internationally by people interested in all augmentative communication systems. Problems which may seem unique and insurmountable to you may well be shared by many.

Let's share our experiences and help each other. □

Family and Community



A Special Day for a Special Girl

with Andrew and Mark

Andrew Murphy of Toronto has been communicating with Blissymbols for several years. In this column, appearing in each issue, Andrew and his father Mark share their experiences and those of other families with the special perspective of people who communicate in a special way.

Ann's Graduation

Ann Running is a classmate and a friend of mine. She graduated from Sunnyview Public School in June, 1983. I attended Ann's graduation ceremony. I thought Ann looked beautiful. She wore a long white dress.

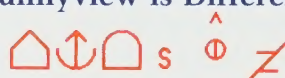
Our teacher, Barbara, asked Ann to be class valedictorian. She was very excited to be chosen. Ann worked very hard on her speech with her teacher, Jane, for nearly two months. Ann would express her ideas in Blissymbols and Jane would help put them on paper in English. Barbara read Ann's speech. I thought it was excellent. Here it is:

Mr. Miller, Ladies, Gentlemen and Graduates, thank you for coming tonight. We hope you enjoy yourselves.

I am proud and happy to be the first Valedictorian using Blissymbols to speak for the

graduating class. I am also happy that I, a nonspeaking student, was chosen to represent the graduates. This day is a great day for all of us. To see the magic word "graduated" on our report cards is a great thrill. We are all a little sad tonight, but we are also happy and excited about going to high school. We have been lucky in the past to have special friends at Sunnyview who have encouraged us in all our work. We will never forget you.

Sunnyview is Different



Sunnyview is a different school. My teacher suggested the word "unique," which means unlike anything else. We know Sunnyview is unique because we, the handicapped students, make it that way by being dependent and by having a staff upon whom we can depend. From the time we leave home by bus in the morning until we arrive home at night, we depend on our drivers, helpers, matrons, volunteers, therapists, cafeteria staff, nurses and caretakers. They have made our days happier, and we hope in some small way we have touched their lives, too. We know we have tried the patience of the office staff many times, but they have never failed us. We knew they were always there when we needed them. What more can one ask of friends? We thank you.

We are also grateful to our teachers and educational assistants whom we have nearly driven crazy. The faint glimmer of intelligence we sometimes showed may have given them the strength to carry on. They

will always be our friends. We also want to thank our super families who have helped us succeed in school. We love them and want them to know we appreciate the care and understanding they have given us.



How lucky we have been to have had dedicated staff and volunteers who gave their time to support the social club, Monte Carlo Night, the Swimathon, the Variety Telethon, the Bazaar, Brownies, Guides, Cubs and the many other special events at Sunnyview. The wonderful field and overnight trips will never be forgotten. Toronto and Ontario really came alive. The highlights for me were the dining and dancing at the Skylon in Niagara Falls and the Island Science School. We are lucky to have had these experiences.

Tomorrow we will be going our separate ways. I want to wish each graduate good luck.



Ann Running in her graduation dress.

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We will miss each other and Sunnyview, but we will not forget the good old times, and we hope Sunnyview remembers us with love and invites us back for dances. We will try to make you proud of us because you have set the principles by which we will live.

Thank you, Ann.

Ann was very happy and excited after the speech. I was also very happy and proud of Ann and happy that a valedictorian used Blissymbols for the first time.

My Summer

This summer my family and I went to New York City. We walked through Central Park and stopped at the Plaza Hotel — a very fancy hotel — to use the washrooms. There was an attendant in the washroom. I never saw a washroom attendant in Toronto. The man could see me going to the bathroom. This made me very uncomfortable and nervous and I couldn't go. Then he helped my Dad pull up my slacks. I didn't like this at all, but my Dad gave him a tip for helping us. I hope that doesn't happen again.

We saw a play on Broadway called "Dream Girls." I thought it was terrific. We all enjoyed it so much. The next day we took a boat cruise around Manhattan Island and we also went to the world's largest department store. People are not the same in New York City as in Toronto. There are more of them. They are more in a rush and busier and there are so many different kinds of people. Nobody seemed to notice I was different. I found it exciting walking the streets of New York. I thought the people in the theatre where we saw "Dream Girls" were different also. They are much more casual and relaxed than the people who go to the O'Keefe in Toronto. I liked that.

P.S. Unfortunately, some of the letters we received earlier did not get printed. Now they are pretty old and we would like to get some new letters to print in future issues, so please write.

Interested readers please write Andrew Murphy, 29 Kellythorne Drive, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada M3A 2L5.

Reaching Out

by Jinny Storr

One of the participants at the Non-Speech Conference in Toronto in November, 1982, was Britt Carlsson, a special education teacher from Sweden. Mrs. Carlsson spoke with Jinny Storr, Consultant to BCI, concerning a new and highly successful outreach program being conducted in Göteborg, Sweden.

For the past three years communication groups with a special mission have been in operation at Bräcke Östergård, a regional education and treatment centre for physically disabled children in Göteborg, Sweden. The original communication group consisted of members of staff and five or six speech-impaired young teenagers who were using a variety of augmentative communication systems. Through hard work, the young people had become proficient communicators within their own setting. Wasn't it time, the group asked, to reach out, to take their

spelling boards, Canon Communicators and Blissymbol displays into public places and begin interacting with the larger Göteborg community?

In weekly, two-hour meetings, each communication group now discusses and plans visits and activities, which have so far taken them to police headquarters, a social work centre and on shopping expeditions. Each project is worked out in minute detail beforehand: What is the purpose of the visit? What is the nature of the place or group to be visited? How does one get there? And, if the day's program involves having a meal in a restaurant, every aspect of dining in a public place is reviewed: Is the dining room really accessible for wheelchairs, even wide electric wheelchairs? Does each person know how to order the particular food he would like to eat? What do meals cost at the chosen restaurant, and what is an acceptable price for a meal?

In the early days the staff made initial outside contacts and helped prepare the public. On such trips



Pelle Anderson visits the local police station.

the ratio of staff to resident was one to one. Gradually, however, the young people have taken on an increasing share of the responsibilities, leaving the staff free to act as resource persons only. Indeed, the young people now both choose the projects to be undertaken and work out the plans for their execution.

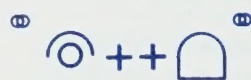
Initially, the communication group saw its task as providing broadening experiences for its members. It soon realized, however, that general public education was necessary before augmentative communication system users could be properly absorbed into the community. Because most of the people they encountered knew little or nothing about speech-impaired people or augmentative communication systems, users often found themselves ignored. This was particularly true when staff stood aside and users were left to cope on their own.

The young people have met the situation in two ways: (1) At their request, engineers have designed a number of different sound signals which can be activated by means suited to the physical capacity of each user; by ringing a bell or sounding a beeper, a user is able to catch the attention of an individual with whom he wishes to speak. (2) Working on their own, the young people have prepared flyers which explain that they communicate in special ways, and give a simple description of their particular communication system. These inexpensively produced flyers are carried along on each project for distribution to anyone willing to accept them.

A second communication group has been formed for younger children 8 to 10 years of age. This group began within Bräcke Östergård by simulating trips to the outside, but is now visiting local shops and other public places.

The original communication group continues to explore Göteborg and to expand the scope of its activities. In an evaluation of its past experiences, the group has concluded that as a result of its achievements — interaction with many kinds of people in many situations — members feel more secure and have a greater sense of personal pride. □

Perspective



On Interaction

by Andrea F. Blau



Photo by Albert Guida.

Andrea F. Blau is a doctoral candidate in Speech and Hearing Sciences at the Graduate School and University Center of City University of New York. She has worked clinically as a speech language pathologist with nonspeaking children since the early 70's. Her clinical and research interests have included vocabulary selection in augmentative communication, conversational interaction of nonspeaking and speaking individuals and the identification of cognitive skills of nonspeaking physically impaired children.

In 1970, our view of a nonspeaking child was of course quite different than it is today. Our treatment techniques for these hearing children were fundamentally oral methods, meaning that our focus was on facilitating vocal speech. Occasionally our treatment was successful (predominantly with language delayed children), but for many of our young nonspeaking friends, the production of perhaps a handful of words or word approximations resulted from years of treatment, and their ability to competently

communicate through vocal language was never attained. The validity of introducing nonspeech systems to many of these children was largely recognized because of a change in philosophy regarding the distinction between speech and language.

While "language" may be defined as our ability to both use and understand abstract symbols to reflect concepts in the exchange of ideas and feelings, "speech" better represents the actual mechanism human beings must use to vocally produce the sounds through which communication exchange occurs. This distinction is often described by the terms "verbal" and "vocal." The term "verbal" reflects our linguistic system, our ability to both understand and express our ideas through symbols, while "vocal" reflects the output mode we conventionally use to "verbalize." With our improved understanding of these distinctions, our philosophy toward the treatment of nonspeaking children (that is, nonvocal children) radically changed. When we describe nonspeech communication in the verbal mode, we mean the linguistic validity of words which are produced by other than vocal means.

Individual Variability

Nonspeaking individuals are not necessarily similar to one another. On the one hand, the reasons why any two nonspeakers cannot adequately communicate using traditional oral methods are so varied one is hard pressed to find even the smallest degree of similarity between them. For example, an autistic nonspeaking child may

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share little in common with a cerebral palsied nonspeaker. On the other hand, even among nonspeakers with similar etiologies, (for example, two quadraplegic athetoid cerebral palsied children) their life experiences, support groups, treatment, educational programs and dispositions can differ to the degree that they have as little in common as, perhaps, you and I.

What you and I share, however, is the ability to use the same language with which we can share meaning. The words on this page, for example, are given meaning in part by me, the individual who is producing them, and in part by you, the reader, and by your ability to interpret them. In other words, there must be a consensus, of sorts, between us. I attempt to keep your perspective in mind while I select the words to express my thoughts, and you evaluate the meaning of my words in terms of your own experience and what you perceive mine to be. For this reason, we call ourselves competent communicators.

Communicative Competence

The evolution of the term "communicative competence" reflects our ever growing interest in what communication really entails. Competence has primarily been viewed as an individual's mastery of the complex rules of grammar — the use of words which are strung together in grammatically appropriate sequences in order to convey a particular intention to another individual. When we interact with an individual who has some type of language problem we often judge that person's competency by evaluating his/her ability to express ideas through the conventional rule system of our society.

While this is understandable and seems appropriate, there is however, another aspect of competence I would like to discuss. This aspect is perhaps best described as "cross-person" competence — the sharing of meaning between partners in dialogue, the speaker taking the perspective of the listener and vice versa. This, I believe, is the true cornerstone of competence — the competence occurring *across* persons

and not merely between individuals — and this is where we should place our focus in our interactions with nonspeaking individuals. We must remember that competence in communication by a nonspeaker is largely determined by our ability to meet him/her half way.

Nonspeaking, Yet Not Unthinking

A great misunderstanding that commonly occurs between speaking and nonspeaking individuals is an underestimation of the nonspeaker's intellectual status. This is often related to the nonspeaker's reduced rate of information exchange. It relates as well to his/her atypical way of communicating and lack of those subtle, conventional aspects of conversation that we naturally share when we speak with one another.

One such feature is referred to as back-channel signalling, back-channels being the signals that show our attention or interest in what someone speaking to us is saying. When we listen to someone speak, we look at the speaker, nod our head and make familiar sounds ("mhm," "yes," "I see"), signals which give feedback to the speaker. While we are often not aware of producing these feedback signals, we are usually quite aware, and often distressed, when they are absent. In fact, without this assurance that the listener is attending, understanding and agreeing or disagreeing with the content of our talk, communication tends to break down.

In nonspeech/speech conversation, lack of conventional back-channel signals given by the nonspeakers is a common problem. This lack may be due either to the nonspeaker's physical impairment (which might make conventional feedback signalling impossible), the nonspeaker's need to focus on his/her communication board when eye contact with the speaker might be essential or the speaker's inability to identify the nonconventional signals used by the nonspeaker to signal attention or interest. A frequent result of this subtle breach of conversational convention is the speaker's assumption that the nonspeaker does not understand the content of the talk being exchanged. Subsequently, speakers

either simplify their speech or end the conversation.

This imbalance can often be seen in our discomfort with the silence resulting from the slow rate with which many nonspeakers communicate. We often need to fill in the gaps in conversation with extraneous talk. This, in turn, often results in talking down to nonspeakers — simplifying our statements in a manner often used by mothers to their young children. This talking down might be perfectly appropriate when we interact with very young nonspeaking children, but is not appropriate when we are speaking with more mature nonspeakers.

Completing Nonspeakers' Messages

There are a variety of methods used by speaking individuals when they attempt to co-construct a nonspeaker's message in as efficient a manner as possible. (The term "co-construct" refers to our taking an active role in helping our nonspeaking conversational partner produce his/her message.) For example, if the nonspeaker is communicating via an alphabet/word board (nonelectronic), as he/she spells out the intended message, we might repeat each letter, summarize the completed words, rephrase items, recall elements already summarized, complete words being spelled, expand upon statements in the process of being spelled or perhaps guess what the nonspeaker may be attempting to convey.

The precise methods we might employ are determined in part by our familiarity with the nonspeaker and the content of his/her talk, and in part by our interaction "style." One's interaction style is strongly determined by the social roles of participants in conversation, in addition to each individual's predisposition toward set behaviour patterns. For example, in a teacher/student interaction in which the teacher is a speaking individual and the student a nonspeaking child, one might expect the teacher to encourage the child to develop his competency by encouraging him to produce complete sentences independently. On the other hand, in a peer/peer in-

teraction involving a speaker and a nonspeaker, one might expect the focus to be on communication rather than language use training.

Equally important is the individual predisposition of the nonspeaker. Similar to vocal conversationalists, some nonspeakers like others to complete their messages, while some resent being interrupted. The point to remember is that the nonspeaker should be encouraged to take the lead, and we should feel comfortable in asking him/her how we can most efficiently assist in this communication sharing.

Communicating with the Nonspeaking Child

When we are communicating with a young nonspeaking child, we are interacting with an individual who has not yet developed what is called "meta" knowledge of language — that is, the ability to "talk about talk" has not yet emerged developmentally. We are faced, therefore, with a much more difficult task in our communicative interactions. For example, a typical misconception (not unlike the mistakes arising in our interactions with nonspeaking adults) is our assumption that the child who is making single or multi-word utterances using nonspeech symbols cannot understand higher

levels of conversation. There are many nonspeaking children whose expressive level in terms of symbol use is at a two-year level, but whose comprehension level is closer to their chronological age (perhaps 4 or 5 years of age). The most important focus for us, as speaking adults, is to attempt to understand the child's perspective and to give him/her input appropriate to that level. Taking the time to identify the body signals and strategies being used by the child in his/her communication attempts is critical in our gaining an awareness of where the child is functioning cognitively and conversationally.

Fear Of Failure

It is important that we are not discouraged by our lack of experience in interacting with nonspeakers, or embarrassed by our lack of knowledge. Nor should we feel uncomfortable asking nonspeakers which methods are most successful for communicating with them (for example, does he/she signal that a word has been spelled or a message completely transmitted? Precisely how are these signals produced? Does he/she mind your attempts at completing message? Should you repeat or rephrase the

entire message, or merely respond to it?). Often the information needed is listed on the nonspeaker's communication board and can be easily shared.

The definition of communicative competence, which I proposed earlier, involves perspective sharing across people. While it is important to try to understand the nonspeaker's perspective, it is equally important for the nonspeaker to understand our perspectives and take responsibility in helping us (his/her conversational partner) during the conversation. Similar to our own need to monitor the nonspeaker's body signals and to gain information about his interest or comprehension of what we are saying, nonspeakers need to monitor their speaking partners' signals to see if their own messages are being successfully interpreted, and when clarification might be needed.

It is important that we accept the nonspeaker's responsibility in the interaction. This acceptance will help us to see nonspeakers as individuals similar to ourselves, who are capable of taking responsibility for their own actions and expressing their own opinions — opinions which may, at times, be different from our own. We as speaking individuals often find it difficult to accept the nonspeaker as an independent individual who may not want or need to be dependent upon our abilities to compensate for his/her disabilities. One place to begin this acceptance process is when we speak with one another.

The Importance of Exposure

As with most experiences, practice makes perfect. The statement is particularly true of our ability to feel comfortable interacting with nonspeaking individuals, as well as nonspeakers gaining expertise in interacting with speakers. While a good deal of emphasis in the research community is currently being placed on the development of strategies to facilitate nonspeech/speech interaction, ultimately the most effective strategies will be developed by the "speakers" themselves as they move toward communicative competence. □



Prentke Romich Company

8769 Township Road 513
Shreve, Ohio 44676-9421

Blissprinting for Autocom

Prentke Romich Company announces the availability of Blissprinting as a standard feature of the Autocom. The Autocom is a micro-processor-based expressive communication aid originally designed at Trace Centre, University of Wisconsin. It is designed for nonspeaking, severely retarded, physically handicapped individuals.

With the incorporation of Blissprinting, the Autocom can now be used with non-readers using Blissymbolics. For example, Blissymbols may appear on the Autocom overlay. Once the user selects the symbol the output may be: (1) the Blissymbol alone; (2) the Blissymbol and corresponding words; or (3) a phrase or sentence describing the symbol.

Blissprinting is distributed in Canada by BETACOM Systèmes pour les Handicapés/ Systems for the Disabled, 6160 Van Den Abele, St. Laurent, Quebec, Canada H4S 1R9. Telephone: (514) 335-1058

Blissymbol Talk



This section focuses on the Blissymbolics system itself. For those already familiar with Blissymbolics, new symbols and new ways of looking at the system are introduced. For those new to the system, an introduction to standard Blissymbols is given, including new ways to use the symbols. The quiz is for everyone.

A Symbol Quiz

After studying the symbols on this page:

1. Give the meaning for these symbols.

a)

b)

c)

2. Draw the symbols for:

a) (to) observe

b) death

c) regretted

For New Symbol Users

Feelings

The abstract form of the "heart" symbol used to denote feelings:

heart



heart shape + thing indicator:
an organ of the body, a concrete object

feeling, emotion



the abstract form of the "heart" symbol (Traditionally one's feelings are supposed to come from the heart.)

(to) enjoy



happy + action indicator

(to) laugh



happy + mouth + action indicator: to be so happy that one's mouth utters a laugh

Blissymbols for Time

past



outline of parabolic mirror focused on what lies behind it

present



past + future:
time between
past and future

future



outline of parabolic mirror focused on what lies ahead of it

Tense Indicators

past action indicator

quarter-sized symbol for *past*, placed above another symbol to indicate past action

action indicator

quarter-sized *action* symbol, placed above another symbol to indicate the present tense of a verb

future action indicator

quarter-sized symbol for *future*, placed above another symbol to indicate future action

For example:

I hoped



I hope



I will hope



New Symbols

Verbs recently added to the Blissymbol Vocabulary:

(to) express regret



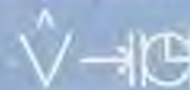
to speak + regret
+ action indicator

(to) feel terror



to fear + intensity:
to feel intense fear

(to) be patient



patience
+ action indicator

(to) evaluate as good



to evaluate + good
+ action indicator

(to) kill



to cause + to die
+ action indicator

(to) compare



to observe + same/equal:
to observe similarities

Research and Publications



Research: a Nontrivial Pursuit

by Geb Verburg



Research and Publications is headed up by Geb Verburg, who has been involved in the field of nonspeech communication since the mid-seventies. A cognitive scientist, Mr. Verburg is currently working as research officer in an OCCC project investigating the use of microcomputers with the disabled.

Finding Answers: Part I

Research is the art and science of asking and answering questions (Silverman, 1977). The artistic aspect is that of asking a question so that it can be answered in a practical or useful way; the scientific aspects are the rules, principles and methods of gathering data and evaluating the evidence so that the answers attained and the decisions made are as objective, truthful and general as possible given the current state of our knowledge.

Research is playing an increasingly important role in this "decade of the disabled," with its slow economic growth and its rapid technological change. On the one hand, economic restraints are creating greater demands for ac-

countability and justification of service programs, which in turn necessitates more research or access to research findings. On the other hand, the scarcity or absence of money for new service programs makes research grants one of the few sources of revenue available for the development and evaluation of new service options.

Economic restraints and technological change are not, however, the only factors that will provide impetus for research. Donald Johnston, Canada's Minister of State for Science and Technology, recently remarked that "[a] growing number of public and professional decisions require awareness and familiarity with the activities, and principles and methods of science and technology." This applies also to the field of Augmentative Communication, where decisions about systems, vocabularies, teaching methods and technical aids will increasingly be based upon research results, and where systematic evaluation of communication systems will become an integral part of the service provided to users.

If this scenario correctly represents future trends, it may be worthwhile for many of us to brush up on our ability to find answers to our questions. I am not suggesting that everyone become a researcher or scientist; this would likely not benefit our clients. However, I would guess that every parent, teacher and therapist — in fact everyone who has worked with communicatively impaired persons — frequently runs into questions which, if they could be answered, would help them to be better helpers. Indeed, every question that emerges in the day-to-day interaction with your child(ren) could be the one that launches you on your first (or next) research project.

This is how it *could* be. But of course it is not quite as simple as

that. There are often so many questions to be answered that someone immersed in a busy clinical or teaching role often does not have the time, or may not quite know which question to tackle first, or how.

Question Types

This issue looks at the first of three broad types of questions, and some ways of tackling them. (The second and third question types will be discussed in "Finding Answers: Part II," in the next issue.) These question types are: (1) questions that have been asked already and have been answered by someone else; (2) questions for which the answers are currently being sought; and (3) questions that have not yet been asked, or represent gaps in our knowledge. Each of these question types corresponds to a qualitatively different form of research: (1) the search for information; (2) traditional research activity involving formulation of answers and evaluation of outcomes; and (3) the type of question that leads to a searching for the things we tend to overlook in our clients or in ourselves.

Finding Answers/Accessing Information

It is becoming more and more likely that a question which has emerged in a specific clinical context may have been answered by someone else in some other setting or geographical location. The problem here, then, is one of first finding out if this is the case; then locating the answer(s), or getting hold of the right information. In this kind of search process, technology will play an important role. A recent article in *BYTE* magazine (Pournelle, 1983), for example, contains the statement, "By the year 2000,

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anyone in the West who seriously wants to, will be able to get the answer to any question the answer to which is known or calculable." Such a state of affairs can be reached if all relevant research findings, clinical observations and techniques, and product and device information are stored in computer databases or information banks in textual or video form.

The technology for these services is already available. Steps toward this future are, for example, the computerized augmentative communication bibliography published in *Communication Outlook* (1982), and the American database ABLEDATA, which contains information about commercially available rehabilitation equipment and aids. The ABLEDATA system can be accessed through a growing number (now 15) of information brokers who also play a role in the verification and updating of the database. The system is not yet available in other countries, but extension to Canada is foreseen.

Currently, the system contains 7500 entries, mostly of American products and aids. However, foreign products are included if an American distributor exists. In the first year of operation (Oct. 1980 - Sept. 1981), 2800 requests for information were received. Twenty-five percent of these came from disabled individuals, family or friends, and forty-three percent from service providers and professionals. These early statistics highlight the fact that the primary caregivers are obviously the main beneficiaries of such a system.

Many hospitals, companies and other settings have also produced films, filmclips or videotapes displaying their products and services. Putting this all together in a central, easily accessible format is of course a mammoth task, but one worth undertaking. This is true especially for fields that are thinly spread around the globe, such as augmentative communication and rehabilitation services. The creation and maintenance of a specialized transnational database and information bank to which everyone in the field can have easy and, if possible, cheap access will be a suitable objective for this decade. It is hoped that ISAAC (International Society for

Augmentative and Alternative Communication, founded in May, 1983) can play a guiding and co-ordinating role here.

From our experience with existing databases we can already list the advantages that such a worldwide network could provide. There are many advantages, especially if the search can be conducted by the person requiring the answer, rather than by a librarian or a broker. A database search literally places the answers at one's fingertips. There is no need to write, phone or visit libraries, or to hunt for recent catalogues. Browsing is not restricted to a particular shelf or only to those catalogues or journals at hand. The proper choice of key words can produce the answer to any question as long as that answer exists in the base. And proper user profiles for aids and devices, when entered in a central information bank, could greatly facilitate the selection and prescription of devices.

If it looks as though I put too much stock in the technology, and in the technological means of gaining information, I do so because in the augmentative communication and rehabilitation fields a great deal of duplication of effort still occurs, and too much time is spent searching for all manner of data and device information — time which might be better used attending to the client's communication skills and to his/her emotional and psychosocial health and development. The database and video information bank technology will give helpers more time to do the things that humans are far better at than computers — that is, help the clients.

Conferencing/Intercontinental Case Consultations

Another more creative and less mechanical possibility of the tele-technology can be found in teleconferencing, where questions can be directed to and cases discussed with colleagues and experts in the field; where colleagues can share their knowledge and insight, and in turn consult others. A trial of such an information exchange, focused on

a particular case, was recently initiated between Boston Children's Hospital, the Artificial Language Laboratory of Michigan State University and the Augmentative Communication Department of the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre. For this international problem-solving effort, the Confer conferencing system is used.

As with all new developments, a considerable amount of learning will have to occur before we are fluent with searching via database and conferencing via computers. It will also take some time for the technology to become optimally adapted to our needs. But the only way these mutual adjustments can come about is when as many of us as possible, in as many different places and countries, immerse ourselves in these new activities.

The combination of potentially unlimited data access, and virtually immediate contact with experts and colleagues in geographically distinct and distant locations, makes this first type of research an exciting and potentially very fruitful pursuit. □

Sources

ABLEDATA: for information write Marian G. Hall, System Manager, National Rehabilitation Information Centre, 4407 Eighth Street N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017 U.S.A. Phone Voice: (202) 635-6090; TDP: (202) 635-5884
Confer: for information write Advertel Communication System, Inc., 2067 Ascot, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103 U.S.A. Telephone: (303) 665-2612

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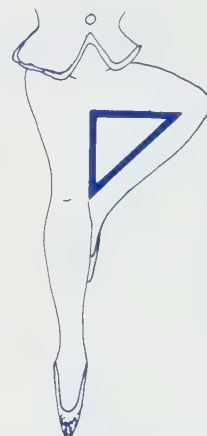
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Teaching and Learning

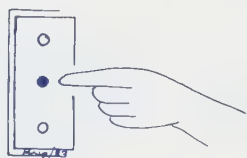


Teaching the Blissymbol Alphabet

As you will remember, our Inaugural Issue (Fall, 1982) introduced the new Blissymbol Alphabet Song, an excellent way to become familiar with Blissymbols and a lot of fun to sing. Introduced at that time, and continuing in subsequent issues, were alphabet cards designed to compliment the song and help teach the Blissymbol Alphabet. This issue features the next five cards in the series. Readers interested in collecting the full set are welcome to write to BCI for copies of the first four issues of *Communicating Together* while they last (see inside front cover for details). The alphabet card series will continue in upcoming issues.



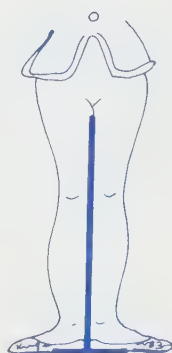
THEN RIGHT ANGLED TRIANGLES



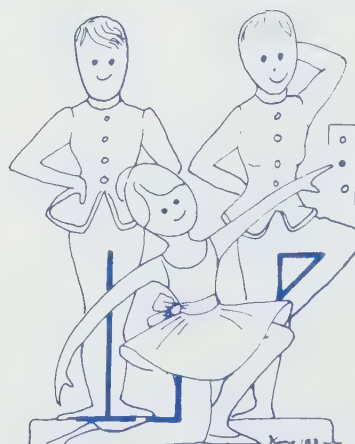
FOLLOWED BY A DOT



MEET RIGHT ANGLES



AND LINES ON BASES



AND NOW WHAT HAVE YOU GOT ?

When CP Students Give a Speech

by Mildred Messinger

Mildred Messinger taught in Berkeley, California for thirty years, including three years as a primary school principal. In 1978, she discovered she had multiple sclerosis. "Putting my new situation together with my former life," she says, "I have become very interested in nonoral communication." Mrs. Messinger is now a writer with a special interest in education.

Jennifer Dean,* 15, and Kenneth Barnard,* 13, have cerebral palsy and are unable to talk or walk. Athetosis and spasticity has also made writing or feeding themselves impossible. Yet, even in their pre-school years, their mothers knew these children had at least average intelligence, possibly above average. The two families joined together, determined to find some way for the children to express their innate abilities. Their goal: to place the children in mainstream school classes.

Both children and parents had hurdled every obstacle on the road to mainstreaming. There were teachers whose tests suggested that grade 3 was as far as these students could go, because their expressions convinced them that the students couldn't "get it" (although in 1981, home computers — that don't have problems with human impatience — indicated that the children could do grade 6 work). Next, there was the IEP (Individual Evaluation Program) meeting with its team (a psychologist, teachers, principal and social worker), who were reluctant to send children so different into the mainstream of an urban junior high school. The meeting ended with programs assigned and an agreement that the mothers could participate in the selection of the special education teacher and two aides.

It happened in September, 1982. Jennifer and Kenneth were enrolled in regular junior high (grade 7) math, science and history, including remedial instruction in language with a special education teacher. (When language can't be practiced

by speaking, a developmental course is required.) Jennifer and Kenneth had made it to the mainstream. Unfortunately, however, the student population only expressed benign neglect and the teachers treated the two like infants. Something had to be done.

A Plan is Hatched

With the help of their mothers and their special education teacher, Margie, Jennifer and Kenneth hatched a plan: Margie would place a packet of information about cerebral palsy in every staff mail box; Jennifer and Kenneth would compose speeches about CP on their home computers. Both mothers also wanted to be sure everyone understood that these young people needed to hear some encouraging words, as well as some practical help with the computer print-out. (Their sentence structure was at best telegraphic, and often sentences were without articles or used the wrong verb tenses.)

Everyone Started to Work

Jennifer and Kenneth's first task was to record their thoughts as well as they could and as quickly as possible. Next, they organized their paragraphs. (The computer, of course, becomes a dear friend during a process such as this; sentences can be rearranged simply by striking a few keys.) Finally, they corrected points of grammar.

On September 21, 1982, the speeches were finally ready. Margie, working on over-all plans for the event, made sure it would be an opportunity for regular students to learn that they could have more dialogue with Jennifer and Kenneth than the "Hi, Jennifer" and "Hi, Kenneth" greetings they had offered so far. The planning called for Cassie (Jennifer's aide) and Jim (Kenneth's aide) to read the speeches, followed by a question period when students would be invited to dialogue with Jennifer and

Kenneth. This allowed them the opportunity to show people in their classes how they could talk to others — Kenneth using his communication board, Jennifer her Micon.** The special education teacher also had a pre-planning discussion with the young people and their aides to be sure everyone understood that the aides were only to be the voices for them; that Kenneth and Jennifer would form answers to questions and their aides would speak the answers. Everyone agreed that was how it would work.

It did not work quite that way.

The Day of the Speeches

Picture this: the students in the history class settle down, face forward and stop talking. Jennifer and Kenneth maneuver their electric wheelchairs to the front of the room, Jim and Cassie standing near them. Jim reads Kenneth's speech, the students listening with total attention and silence (very differently than they do when the teacher instructs; no one is whispering or shuffling books and papers):

My name is Kenneth. I was born on June 6, 1969. I am 13 years old. I have cerebral palsy. I cannot speak, but I like to talk. I cannot walk, but I enjoy playing basketball. This may seem weird, but it will not after I explain my condition to you.

Cerebral palsy is caused by an injury to the brain. No one can catch it. I have cerebral palsy because when I was being born an accident happened (placenta previa) and I was without oxygen. This caused my brain to be damaged. This damage affects only my muscles. I can think and feel just as well as you. I just have a hard time getting my body to go where I want it to and my mouth to say what I want it to.

I have a lot of equipment to help me move about and talk. I have my communication system to talk with and my electric wheelchair to move around in. My communication system is a Blissymbol board because it made the first children who

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of Irwin Toy Ltd.
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used it so happy. I use it to talk. I point to the words and you read them. My wheelchair is an E and J (Everest and Jennings). It has four speeds. I have to charge my battery each night. If I forget, it will not go fast.

I love all sports. My favorite movie is E.T. My favorite food is mayonnaise and jelly sandwiches. My favorite subject in school is math. My favorite TV program is *Happy Days* and Fonzy is my favorite star. Rick James is my favorite singer and Super Freak is my favorite cut. I like dogs and cats. Three Degree is my favorite game. TV wrestling is my favorite sport.

I use an Apple II Plus computer and a floppy disk to do my school work. I just received my own computer. Now I do things all by myself, just like you.

Jim finishes. The students burst into applause. Cassie stands up front. She reads Jennifer's speech:

What I have is cerebral palsy. CP is short for cerebral palsy. It is not something you catch, like flu or chickenpox. It happens to you before you are born or when you are born. Your brain has two parts. One part is the thinking and feeling part. I think and have feelings just like anybody. The other part controls the way a person moves. That part is called the cerebellum, and that is where my trouble is. When my mind tells my body to do something, it does not always do what I want. I can't balance myself, so I can't stand, sit by myself or walk.

Some people with CP can talk, but I can use a keyboard, and I can point, so I use an Apple computer, a Micon, and a communication board to talk to people and to do my homework. It is slow sometimes, but I get things done. I have two wheelchairs. One is pushed by someone and the other is an electric one that I guide myself. It is a large blue one. It goes pretty fast downhill. I can do almost anything I really want to do, but it sometimes takes me a long time. I enjoy lots of things

like baseball, playing Dungeons with my friends Greg and Dan, being with my friends and learning new things. I do not give up.

Some well-known people who have CP are the guy who draws the "Archie" comic strip, the writer Earl Schenck Miers and maybe the Roman emperor, Claudius. There is a guy named Emil Avakian who can't talk, feed himself or walk, but he is a real computer genius and has invented a lot. There is a man called Christy Brown who can't walk, talk or feed himself, but he wrote a book called *Downward the Days*, and it was so good it was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection. I don't care to be a writer, but maybe I can work with computers. I will try.

Again, the same applause. As the applause dies away, Margie stands up and tells the students they may ask questions. Following are parts of the dialogue. Jim and Cassie are once again the "voices" for Kenneth and Jennifer.

As you read the dialogue, please keep this in mind: when the CP person's "voice" comes from the body of another, the other must work to stay conscious that he or she is playing a part only. When the "voice"

keeps this in mind, the questioner is helped to remain aware of the CP person. When the "voice" forgets, however, the CP person becomes "object." Happily, there were some students who could continue on their own to be aware that they were speaking with Jennifer and Kenneth.

(Please note words in bold face indicate questions that are properly directed to Kenneth and Jennifer.

—Ed.)

Girl: *(directly to Kenneth and Jennifer)*
How do you like this school?

Jim: O.K. Jennifer, why don't you answer first? *(Beep, beep, the noise of the Micon when it is talking)*

Cassie: *(looking at the Micon display)*
She says it's good.

Jim: Kenneth says he's excited about going to this school.

Boy: Are Kenneth and Jennifer going to eighth grade here?

(Following two sentences from Cassie and Jim, to whom the questions were addressed, the conversation changed in a very significant way. It is difficult to continue to address questions to a person who cannot talk when the answer comes physically from someone else. The difficulty is increased when the talker uses the syntax of his or her own voice.)

Jim: Kenneth says yes.



Kenneth and Jim answer questions from the class.

Photo by Joan Brannigan.

Boy: (again, directly to Kenneth and Jennifer) **What's your favorite baseball team?**

(Bless this sensitive child.)

Cassie: Jennifer says the Giants are hers.

(Class cheers "Yeah!")

Girl: I'd like to know about her favorite colour.

Jim: (immediately to the class, not looking at Jennifer) I think that might be obvious. (Jennifer is wearing lavender pants, shirt and jacket. The class laughs at his answer. Meanwhile, Jennifer is working at her Micon; beeping can be heard. Cassie is watching it.)

Cassie: Purple. (Hooray! Now, the talk can go back to Jennifer and Kenneth.)

Boy: Has Kenneth ever played on a team in basketball? And Jennifer?

Cassie: (watches Micon) Jennifer says no.

Jim: (on his own) Kenneth hasn't either.

Boy: What street do they live on? (So much for dialogues with Jennifer and Kenneth.)

Jim: (still on his own) Kenneth lives pretty close. They take the bus. It's a wheelchair bus.

(Jennifer doesn't have time to answer.)

Boy: He could ride his motor ... (cycle?) wheelchair.

(student laughter)

Jim: (still on his own) The first day, he and his mom came with the wheelchair and just walked over.

Boy: **I want to ask Kenneth and Jennifer. (Another sensitive student!) When you're sleeping, do you ever get scared, like somebody's coming?**

Cassie: Jennifer says no.

Jim: **Kenneth, do you ever get scared?** No.

(Once again, the students try to do what Margie instructed.)

Boy: **I want to ask Kenneth. I know it's fun, but I want to ask him himself. Is it fun?**

Jim: This thing here? (Pointing to Kenneth's display, the boy shakes his head, "no", and points to Kenneth's wheelchair.)

Jim: Oh, the chair. **Kenneth, is it fun in the chair?** (He looks at Kenneth and then at the board he is pointing to.)

Jim: (looking back to questioner) No.

This story points out one of the most difficult experiences CP people have trying to get into the mainstream. Conversation with them is abnormal at best, and at worst it can become downright peculiar and alienating. When a CP person and one other are talking, the other will ordinarily voice both parts of the conversation in order to make sure the CP person's meaning has been properly received. This kind of dialogue is abnormal enough and takes some getting used to, but when talkers speak for CP persons, as we have just seen, they could for example begin to play the role of the CP person by using "I" when answering for the CP person. This is still abnormal dialogue, but probably far less alienating than what happens when the conversation becomes one between the third person and the other about the CP person.

What can an aide do to avoid intruding? What comes to mind is the opposite of the person who, upon entering a room, is characterized by what is often called "presence." Perhaps people who are voices for non-vocal persons need to have just the opposite characteristic, something that might be called a quality of "absence." It's something to think about. □

*The names Kenneth and Jennifer are fictitious. The story is true.

**A portable electronic augmentative communication device with a keyboard and a one-line strip display.

Nonvocal Inservice for Tulsa

by Mary Losoncy

Mary Losoncy has a masters degree in Learning Disabilities and Mental Retardation. She is head teacher at the Whitney Development Center, operated by the Tulsa County Superintendent of Schools. For several years she was in a classroom, where she became interested in the field of nonvocal communication. At present she serves as a nonvocal consultant with the Tulsa County school system. Ms. Losoncy is also a presenter for the Blissymbolics Communication Institute.


The Second Intensive Inservice Institute for Nonvocal Communication Implementation was held from June 6 to 16, 1983 by the Communicative Disorders Unit of the Department of Education, the University of Tulsa. Funded by a three-year federal grant, the Institute aims to help professionals, paraprofessionals and parents deal more effectively with communication among multi-handicapped children. The Institute was an unqualified success, drawing participants not only from Tulsa but from many rural towns in Oklahoma — people who would normally have little chance to obtain firsthand information about nonvocal communication.


The first week of the Institute was devoted to manual sign systems. An important goal of the week was to give participants a small core vocabulary of manual signs needed by young children when they first begin to communicate with signs. Another important goal was to give participants information required to decide which systems would be most useful for their children or students.

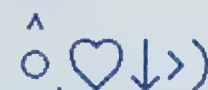
In pursuit of these goals, the workshop presented an overview of manual systems, including sign patterns to help the participants understand the derivation of the core signs. In particular, the Amer-Ind Gestural Code was reviewed, and participants were able to practice the Amer-Ind signals through the use of videotapes prepared by founder Madge Skelly-Hakanson.

Answers to Symbol Quiz (from p.13)

1. a) to fear, or fears, (to) be afraid
b) enjoyed
c) will laugh

2. a) 

b) 

c) 

Note: For a better understanding of all the component parts within Blissymbols, the reference *Blissymbols for Use*, B. Hehner, 1980, is highly recommended.

Enough information was presented to enable participants to decide if Amer-Ind Code would be useful for their students, with the understanding that an Amer-Ind Certification Workshop was necessary for serious use of this system. The attention to Amer-Ind was especially appreciated by participants, in view of the strong native American cultural influence in Oklahoma reflected by the participation of a number of native Americans.

Also in the first week, participants heard about developmental milestones affecting gestural systems, the use of "natural gestures" as the basis of a communication system for severely handicapped children and the use of *The Total Communication Checklist and Assessment** by Waldo, Barnes and Berry as a tool for determining the best augmentative system to use with children. In addition, participants heard about ways in which parents can participate in the use of systems, and were given a general assessment of the present state of gestural systems for non-vocal children.

The Institute's second week was devoted to visual graphic systems and technology presented in light of their developmental difficulty, once again in an effort to help parents and professionals choose the system best suited to the needs of their children. Additional time was spent on Blissymbolics in the form of a one-day seminar integrated into the workshop week. Participants were also encouraged to attend a Blissymbolics Elementary Workshop.

It was a full and exciting week. Specific presentations included:

- An overview of graphic systems, including object and picture boards, picsyms, PIC, Rebus, Blissymbols and native written language
- A screening of the videotape *Breakthrough*** the focal point around which interpersonal considerations for augmentative communication users was considered
- A look at the technology available to assist with nonvocal systems
- The role of the occupational therapist in the assessment, seating and positioning necessary

for the use of the various technologies.

- The role of the rehabilitation engineer in adapting and modifying technology to the needs of specific persons

There were several technological presentations as well, including demonstrations of the HandiVoice, Zygo switches and scanners, the Texas Instruments Vocaids and Prentke-Romich aids. The technology available from a number of additional companies was also reviewed.

We look forward with anticipation to the third and final series of workshops in June of 1984. □

**The Total Communication Checklist and Assessment* is available from Kansas Neurological Institute, 3107 W 21st Street, Topeka, Kansas, U.S.A. Price: \$4.75.

***Breakthrough* is a 40-minute film focusing on three nonverbal people using Blissymbols. Available in Canada from: Lauren Productions, 56 Shaftesbury Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4T 1A3. In the U.S. from: Perennial Education, 477 Roger Williams, P.O. Box 855, Ravina, Highland Park, Il. 60035 U.S.A.



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Augmentative Communication in the Pacific Islands

by Anne Warrick

Anne Warrick, a speech pathologist, has for many years been actively involved with Blissymbols at the Ottawa Crippled Children's Treatment Centre. She is a senior presenter, and has travelled widely giving BCI Elementary Training Workshops. She is the author of Blissymbols for Preschool Children.

In the summer of 1982, a BCI Elementary Workshop was presented in Changua, Taiwan, which resulted in a continuing liaison between BCI and Ronald D. Smith (Ed. D.), Director of the Department of Education at the University of Guam. This past summer, I was fortunate to return to the Pacific to present the University of Guam's Department of Special Education Summer Course Ed494. The course covered alternate and augmentative communication systems for nonspeaking children, and was under the direction and supervision of Ron Smith, once again strengthening BCI's development in the Pacific.

The course was held on the island of Majuro in the district centre of the Marshall Islands. Majuro is of coral reef formation, and rises only three feet above sea level. Its inhabitants speak the Micronesian language of Marshallese. The course was presented in English, the second language of the island.

The Republic of the Marshall

Islands' Education Department is responsible for the education of children in elementary and high school. Further education for the people of the Micronesian Islands is provided at the college level in Ponape, and at the university level in Guam, Hawaii and on the U.S. Mainland. Training programs for teachers are also brought to the islands. The Department of Special Education, supervised by Aliksa Andrike, was in fact largely instrumental in the success of ED494. (Ten special educators were enrolled.)

The course was divided into two sessions daily — a two-hour lecture, followed by an assessment of children with delayed speech and language development. These children, who were selected by teachers enrolled in the course, had been students during the school year. Assessments were carried out informally, with culturally appropriate materials. The teachers assisted with assessments, followed by discussion relevant to the appropriate intervention and program for each student.

The suggested remediation for the

children identified a need for practical suggestions and program demonstrations encompassing a wide range of special needs. These included seating, feeding techniques, accessing for the physically disabled and behaviour shaping for the developmentally delayed. Persons with expertise in these areas of rehabilitation are not readily available to children in the isolated islands of the Pacific.

The decision to provide a more general course in alternate communication rather than a BCI Elementary Workshop was my responsibility. It was my opinion that Blissymbols applied inappropriately were detrimental to both the user and the development of the Blissymbol system, but when applied appropriately were dynamic. As a result of the course, Marshallese teachers will now be able to identify potential Blissymbol users accurately, and to request a BCI workshop for the next stage of their professional development. I have my luggage packed and labelled already. YOKWE (a Marshallese greeting). ○→← ○←→

Blissymbol Stamps in Israel

מדבקות של
בליס-סמבולים

BCI is pleased to report the printing of Hebrew Blissymbol stamps, translation and production coordinated by Judy Seligman-Wine. Ms. Seligman-Wine was a member of the original team at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre that first applied Blissymbols with cerebral palsied children in 1971. Since her emigration to Israel in 1973, she has provided augmentative communica-

tion instruction and consultation in Israel. Her work, which has been given strong assistance by the financial contributions of her friends and supporters in Toronto, Canada, is an impressive example of international accomplishment.

For further information regarding Hebrew Blissymbol stamps, please write: Ms. Judy Seligman-Wine, Ramat Motza, Jerusalem, Israel.

**This section of
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Augmentative Communication



The Makaton Vocabulary: A Quiet Revolution

by Diane Gibson



Diane Gibson is a senior speech therapist who has worked for several years in the field of mental handicap in the United Kingdom. She now lives in Virginia, U.S.A., and is currently a national tutor and a representative for the Makaton Vocabulary Development Project.

During recent years increasing attention has been focused on augmentative communication systems for people who have either never achieved, or who have lost, the ability to speak. In Great Britain one such augmentative communication system, the Makaton Vocabulary, has been received with a great deal of interest and enthusiasm by workers in the field of mental handicap, and its use has become widespread. The results of the most recent survey carried out by the Thomas Coram Research Unit in fact shows that the Makaton Vocabulary is now in use in 95 per cent of all British ESN(S) Schools (schools providing education for severely mentally handicapped children).

Survey results only cover children in special schools, though the vocabulary is being used in a variety of other establishments, such as hospitals, adult training centres, pre-school units and the homes of mentally handicapped adults and

children. Its use is not restricted to specific age or intellectual ranges, nor to the mentally handicapped. Research is in fact now showing that the Makaton Vocabulary can be used effectively with young Downs Syndrome babies (Le Prevost, 1983).

Its Characteristics

What is the attraction of this particular program? What does it have to offer that makes its use so widespread?

The Makaton Vocabulary program began in 1972 in Surrey, England, as a project to teach signs from British Sign Language (BSL) to institutionalized deaf, mentally handicapped adults (Walker, 1977), and in 1976 was revised for use with children. It is a language program designed to teach approximately 350 BSL signs in a structured manner, as an aid to developing language through the visual medium of the signs and the logical structure of the sign language. It is also designed to provide a basic means of communication to these severely impaired.

Makaton is not a devised signing system, but rather a vocabulary of words/signs using signs from the British Sign Language of the deaf. Key signs and some of the performance features of natural sign language such as facial expression, body language, etc., are used. Key signs are presented in spoken word order, giving Makaton a signed English framework. The Makaton Vocabulary does not attempt to use signs for all components of spoken language; only key words are signed, giving a great advantage to people with memory restriction (Walker 1983).

Makaton is also a "core" vocabulary of heavy-duty words that are simple to learn and basic for early communication. The vocabulary has been deliberately limited in size to keep memory loading and retention light. Word/signs, wherever possible, can be combined together to form phrases and small sentences from words used earlier as single words, again reducing memory load.

The vocabulary is arranged in a developmental sequence. Easy concepts are presented first and more difficult ones follow later, thus enabling the handicapped person to work through the program as far as his/her ability allows. A two-way functional communication process has been built into the scheme, each stage containing vocabulary not only for handicapped individuals, but reciprocal and facilitating word/signs for their partner(s), in order to permit two-way communication to develop.

In addition to growth in concept and language development, improvements in other areas also occur. Eye contact, attention, sociability, vocalization and expressive speech have all been reported to be increased, and reduction in inappropriate behaviour has also been reported (Walker & Armfield 1981).

Teaching the Makaton Vocabulary is carried out at two levels: a structured, formal technique is used with the handicapped person in order to gain comprehension and to encourage the use of the sign/words; signs are then taught in an informal manner to generalize use. (It is essential to encourage generalized use in everyday living). At the same time as individual items are taught, opportunities for a child or adult to experience their use in small, meaningful phrases and sentences are provided (Walker 1983). Also available is a manual of language programs, which provides programs for teaching every stage (Walker 1976).

Its Uses

The 1976 Revised Makaton Vocabulary is now in use with:

- Mentally handicapped deaf and non-deaf children and adults who have little or no expressive speech and poor comprehension
- Children and adults who are both mentally and physically handicapped
- Those considered to be autistic

- Some young deaf children within the normal range of intelligence
 - Children with severe articulation or speech rhythm problems who need a temporary alternative
 - Certain normal adults with acquired communication problems
- And recently Makaton has been reported to have been of value to:
- Partially sighted children and adults
 - Psychiatric cases where language and communication is impaired (Walker 1983)

The program may also be used in conjunction with other augmentative communication systems. The Makaton Vocabulary Development Project U.K has set up working parties to evaluate the use of the Makaton Vocabulary as a developmental framework for teaching symbols, either alone or in combination with sign and speech. Blissymbols, for example, are being matched to the Makaton Vocabulary by field officers from the Blissymbolics Centre (U.K.) and the Makaton Vocabulary Development Project.

Its Effectiveness

The design of the Makaton Vocabulary would seem to be the key to its effectiveness. In 1981 Walker & Armfield made the following observations, summarizing the reasons why Makaton is effective:

- Makaton appears to be the only alternative communication system which has been divided into developmental stages. The stages suggest a realistic and economical limit on vocabulary instruction for children with very limited abilities. The freedom of choice within the stages also allows for as much creative judgment as the instructor wishes.
- The Vocabulary provides a guide for the most experienced language development teacher or therapist, as well as those new to vocabulary development when decisions must be made concerning priorities in communication development. It also offers a guide to planning and measuring progress.
- The range of the Vocabulary has been carefully chosen to insure that as concepts are learned they

can be combined into two- or three-word, or longer, sentences.

- Graded stages permit communication to begin immediately at the most basic level.
- It is a potential guide for using alternative communication systems other than BSL for persons with severe communication impairment.
- Because the system is widely used throughout the United Kingdom, it offers an exceptional opportunity for collecting data on the language development of persons with severe language impairment.

Conclusion

It is essential to be fully conversant with Makaton before using it with communicatively impaired people. Basic one-day training workshops are thus available in the U.K., which provide an introduction to signing, background to the scheme and guidelines on teaching procedures and implementation. Follow-up training and practice to maintain standards in signing are also necessary. To handle this, advanced workshops are also available. All courses are arranged by the Makaton Vocabulary Development Project, a charitable, non-profit-making organization, which also provides lectures, related publications and teaching materials.

Interest from other countries is increasing. Makaton is now in use in Australia and New Zealand, a workshop involving participants from Hong Kong, South Africa, Belgium, Norway, Holland and the United States has been held recently in Great Britain; and discussions concerning a new Makaton Vocabulary United States Resource Centre are now in progress. □

For information concerning Makaton Vocabulary training courses, publications and current and proposed research plans, please write: Mrs. Margaret Walker, Director, Makaton Vocabulary Development Project, 31 Firwood Drive, Camberley, Surrey, England.

In the U.S.A. please write: Dr. Aaron Armfield, College of Education, Department of Counselling and Special Education, Omaha, Nebraska, 68182 U.S.A.

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Readers Write



Dear Ms. Thorvaldson,

This brief letter is to let you know how much I enjoy the BCI magazine *Communicating Together*. With so many high calibre journals currently in circulation, it is difficult to devote enough time to read all the material available. *Communicating Together* is impossible to set aside!

The topics selected are informative, educational and factual; in addition the "human interest" stories are totally absorbing. CRCD is proud to include *Communicating Together*, in its journal holdings in the Information Resource Centre. Congratulations!

Sincerely,
Maureen Vasey (Mrs.)
Director, Information Services
Canadian Rehabilitation Council
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cause 	science 	knowledge 	opinion 	event 	idea 	(to) help, aid 	Blissymbol
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question 	international 	news 	lucky 	different 	(to) be 	from 	to, towards

Goodbye

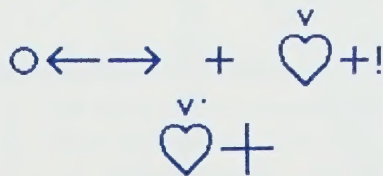
Dear Readers,

Before leaving for Vancouver, I'd like to say what a pleasure it's been to work with the team that launched *Communicating Together*. I've learned a great deal about the very fine work of B.C.I. and the many organizations involved in Augmentative Communication. It's been inspiring to witness the dedication of the people in this field. I've learned so much. Computers, for example, have taken on an entirely new face for me, having seen first hand the amazing things they can do for disabled people — and everyone.

I feel *Communicating Together* has had a good start, and I am sure it will continue to grow and develop with its new editor, Sarah Swartz, who brings to the position a wealth of experience.

I'm happy that I will continue to be a part of the magazine. It'll be fun being B.C.I.'s "West Coast Correspondent."

Goodbye and good luck.



Patricia Thorvaldson
Editor

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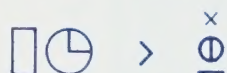
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Schedule of Events



BCI Elementary Workshops

BCI Elementary Workshop training sessions are held throughout the year and provide professionals and families with an opportunity to learn about Blissymbolics. The workshops include thirty hours of lectures, and group and individual assignments.

Forthcoming Workshops:

In Ontario

—March 6-8, and
—July 10-12, 1984 in Toronto
Contact: Blissymbolics Communication Institute, 350 Rumsey Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4G 1R8
Telephone: (416) 425-7835

In New Brunswick

—March 26-30, 1984 in St. John
Contact: Sherry Duke, c/o Vocational Workshop, Centracare, P.O. Box 3227, Station "B", St. John, N.B. Canada E2M 4H7

Correspondence Course 1984 In Regina

In association with the Organizing Committee of the Canadian Speech and Hearing Association Conference, a BCI Elementary Workshop by correspondence will be held April/May 1984. The workshop will include two additional on-site days preceding the CSHA conference in Regina, Saskatchewan. For further information write: Mrs. Anne Warrick, 1949 Fairbanks Ave., Ottawa, Ontario Canada K1H 5Y2
Telephone: (613) 731-4439

In Wisconsin

—November 10-12, 1983 in Madison
Contact: Aleta Barmore, Communication Programs, U.S. Extension-Madison, Room 225, Lowell Hall, 610 Langdon St., Madison, WI 53706 U.S.A.
Telephone: (608) 262-4379

In India

—Early November, 1983 in Calcutta
Contact: Anne Warrick, 1949 Fairbanks Ave., Ottawa, Ontario Canada K1H 5Y2
Telephone: (613) 731-4439

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Available for purchase early in 1984.

Inquiries should be directed to Lorne Mitchell, Marketing and Distribution, Blissymbolics Communication Institute.

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Third International Nonspeech Conference

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For Registration and Program Mailings contact:

Dr. Howard Shane
Developmental Evaluation Clinic
The Children's Hospital Medical Center
300 Longwood Ave.
Boston, MA 02115 U.S.A.

The Computer and Communication for the Physically Handicapped

The second annual seminar of the Institut de réadaptation de Montréal will be held December 1, 2, 1983, at the Institut, located at 6300 Darlington Avenue, Montreal. Theme of the seminar is "The Computer and Communication for the Physically Handicapped." For further information, please contact: Madame Brigitte Junius, Head, Public Relations Services,
Telephone: (514) 735-3741, locals 338 and 339

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